

## **Community Involvement Update for August 16, 2015 Mexican Water Chapter Meeting**

*Summary:* R9 RPMs Linda Reeves, and ZiZi Searles spoke at the Mexican Water Chapter meeting at 10 am, Sunday August 16<sup>th</sup>, 2015 at the Mexican Water Chapter House. The purpose of this meeting was to apologize and provide updates on the emergency response, and listen to community concerns. Topics discussed included an introduction to the ALERT team (chapter level emergency response), when access to the river will resume, impacts to farmers living next to the river, desire to see more sampling points tested in the vicinity of Mexican water farms, and long term risks related to the spill. A contract translator assisted EPA at this meeting.

### **Number of Participants: 25 people**

Mexican Water Chapter Officials Present:

Jerry Tsosie – Chapter President (505) – 406 – 8566  
David John – Vice President (505) – 330 – 8526  
Curtis Yanito – Grazing Official (435) – 459 – 0688  
Maryann Woody – Chapter Sectary (928) – 429 – 0943  
Eva John – ALERT Team (435) – 444 – 9004

EPA sat in the front of the Chapter alongside chapter officials and provided an update. The chapter meeting was conducted primarily in Navajo. Linda Reeves provided EPA's statement to the Chapter. This statement included an apology, a reading of Gina McCarthy's statement, how EPA was working with the Navajo government and other federal entities to provide water hauling locations and hay. EPA also provided an update on the progress on sampling and the release of public data. EPA also made a statement that EPA is working with the Navajo Attorney General's office on claim form language, and that the process for compensation for damages would be communicated to impacted Chapters at some point in the near future. We encouraged the Chapter community to document their losses and work with their local Grazing and Farm Board officials to report damages.

David Nez, liaison from Navajo Emergency Response also attended the meeting, and spoke at length about resources available to the community (David's report was entirely in Navajo).

The following is a summary of questions/comments submitted to the EPA by the audience:

- When will the ban be lifted?
- What happened at Gold King Mine and why? (Looking for more than fact sheet info)
- If I water my crops with river water is it safe?
- Requests to test water on in an irrigation pond in hydraulic connection with the San Juan River;
- Requests for more sampling locations in the Mexican Water area;
- Comment that keeping livestock away from the river is difficult;
- Comment that there was a school close to the river and impacts of spill on children's.

ZiZi Searles, RPM R9  
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health.

- Questions on long term exposure and how people would be compensated 20 – 30 years from now;
- Question on how long crops can go without water before they die.

EPA left the meeting at noon in order to make a 1:00 pm Chapter meeting at the Cudai Chapter. The Cudai Chapter update is provided in a separate report.

ZiZi Searles, RPM R9  
August 16<sup>th</sup>, 2015